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Kara Phillips
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Lebanon
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Kara Phillips. I am a Correctional Nurse Supervisor at the Department of Corrections and an 1199 Union Delegate. As a supervisor, I run the department. I help my staff to have answers they need, supplies to perform their jobs well, and together we build a culture with custody to work together to provide services to the inmate population in a timely fashion. I am an advocate for them and because of that I am here today to ask you to fund DOC Healthcare and reentry services so that we can provide a community level of care for the individuals we care for.

I love being a nurse and helping others. I love developing a team of nurses who also want to work hard to provide healthcare services to our patients, and the care to live better lives once they are released. More funding would allow us to hire more full time staff within DOC. As a state, we are finally heading in the right direction of providing the best care possible within a correctional setting, now we just need the nurses, social workers, dentists, doctors, and more to be able to provide the community level of care that our patients deserve. In order to make that happen, we need competitive salaries to attract them. It is hard to recruit healthcare professionals into this field, especially when they are taking a pay cut to come work for us! Once we do get the opportunity to get individuals inside for a tour, they are amazed at the work we do for the inmates and many do want to join our team. But, we need to recruit and retain these employees with competitive salaries!

Because of short staffing, I and many of my colleagues are exhausted and have very low morale. At certain times, there were only a handful of nurses still able to work that didn't have COVID, and instead of giving up, we all dug deeper than ever to continue to provide the services to our patients that they needed. We still

had a job to do, and there was no choice but to work harder and longer. We will always continue to do that, but that isn't fair to us and to our patients. Please help us provide the care that we want to be able to provide to our patients by increasing funding to DOC Healthcare and reentry services. Thank you for your time.